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## **Alaska Guardsman from Sitka trains with Mongolians during Khaan Quest**

**FIVE HILLS TRAINING AREA, Mongolia** – Nestled in a vast windswept valley outside of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Capt. Walter Hotch-Hill, logistics officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 297<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard, is one of approximately 80 Guardsmen taking part in Khaan Quest 12.

Khaan Quest is a regularly scheduled, multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Khaan Quest 12 is the latest in a continuing series of exercises designed to promote regional peace and security. This exercise marks the tenth iteration of this regionally significant training event.

Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh visited Khaan Quest this week and spent time at the staff exercise portion of the exercise Aug. 15. While talking with Soldiers of the Alaska National Guard, McHugh spoke with Hotch-Hill, who is the battle captain for the staff exercise.

The training has given participants an opportunity to learn from and work with each other, despite language challenges, he explained.

"It's a great experience here," Hotch-Hill said. "This has been a great opportunity for us to train with international forces."

Despite his busy training schedule in Mongolia, Hotch-Hill has also had a chance to experience the local culture and explore the surrounding landscape.

"This is my first time in Mongolia," Hotch-Hill said. "We spent five or six hours hiking around the hills up here. It's a beautiful land. I've really enjoyed it."

Hotch-Hill was born and raised in Sitka, Alaska. He has served in the Alaska Army National Guard for 10 years, including four years as a chemical operations specialist prior to commissioning as an infantry officer. Hotch-Hill was Honor Graduate at his advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in 2003. Later that year, he earned the

distinction of Soldier of the Year for the Alaska Army National Guard and went on to be named the National Guard Soldier of the Year for U.S. Pacific Command. In 2007, he deployed to Iraq with B Company, 297<sup>th</sup> Support Battalion, 207<sup>th</sup> Infantry Group (Scout), Alaska Army National Guard.

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**Cutline:**

**CPTHotch-Hill.jpg:**

Secretary of the Army John McHugh speaks with Capt. Walter Hotch-Hill, logistics officer, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard, during a visit Aug. 15 during exercise Khaan Quest 2012, held at the Mongolian Armed Forces Peace Support Center in the vicinity of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Khaan Quest is regularly scheduled multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Photo: Spc. John G. Martinez, U.S. Army